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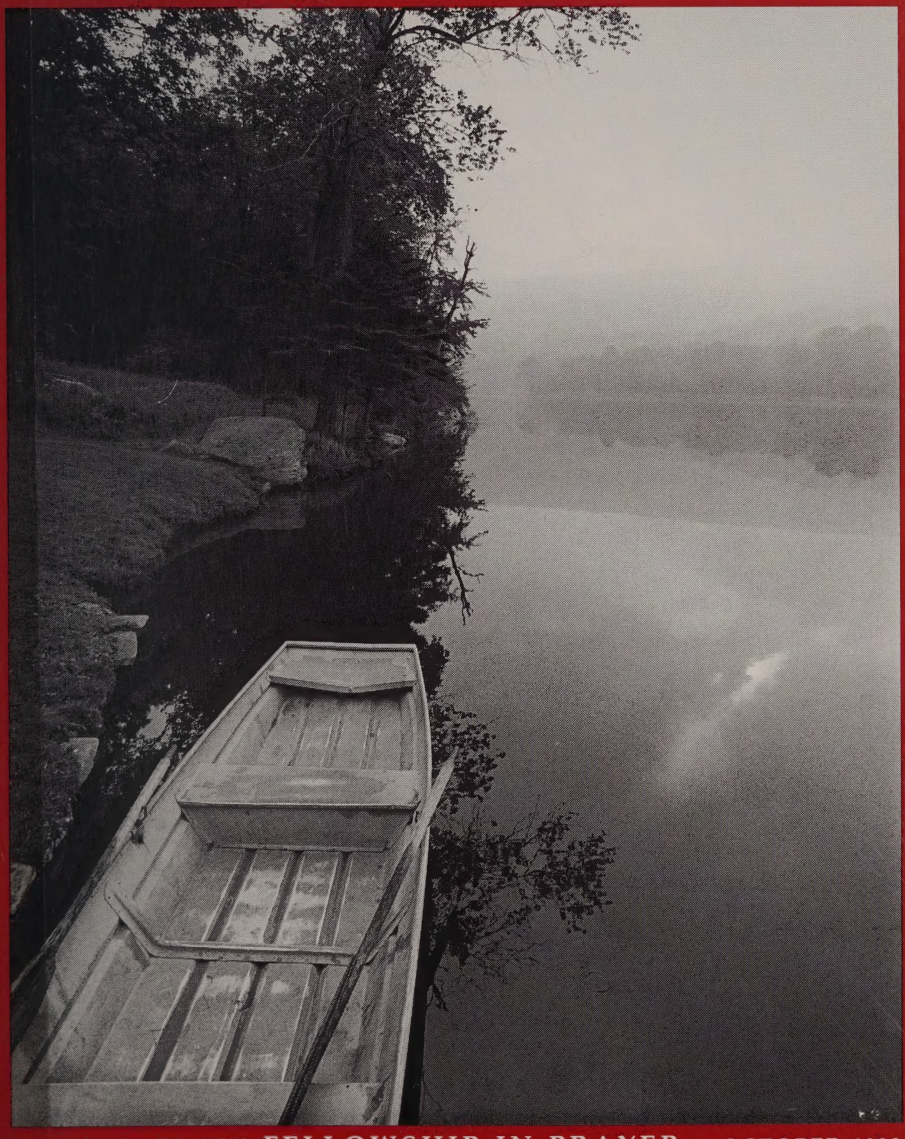
SACRED JOURNEY



THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ OCTOBER 1998

SACRED JOURNEY™

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is

to encourage and support

a spiritual orientation to life,

to promote the practice of

prayer,

meditation,

and service to others,

and to help bring about

a deeper spirit

of unity among humankind.

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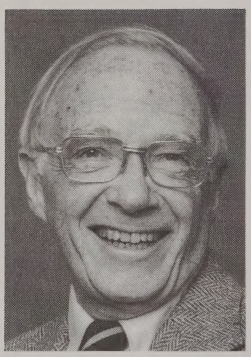
Cover photo by: Tom Dunham

FROM THE PRESIDENT



"Why am I doing this?" I raised my eyes from my bare feet to the seemingly endless plain of sand and mud before me. To my right, a line of tall, thin poles planted in the sand receded toward the distant, Holy Island of Lindisfarne. One wanted to stay close to the poles, for there was quicksand on either side. One also wanted to keep moving, because this was a tidal flat. At high tide the ground on which I walked would be six feet under water. I remembered then, some lines from a poem by David Adam, the Vicar of Holy Island:

God calls you out from where you are. God calls you from your safety and security. Come!
You need a Holy Island, a holy place that makes all places holy. Come!
Let walking become your prayer, let journeying be part of your song. Come!
You may discover yourself, you may meet your own mysterious being. Come!

So I walked on. Once securely on solid ground again, my weariness melted away. Together with my companions on this pilgrimage, I was on Lindisfarne, the ancient dwelling place of two of Celtic Christianity's greatest saints, St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert.

To walk where they walked, and pray where they prayed, deepened in all of us an almost tangible sense of the divine presence.

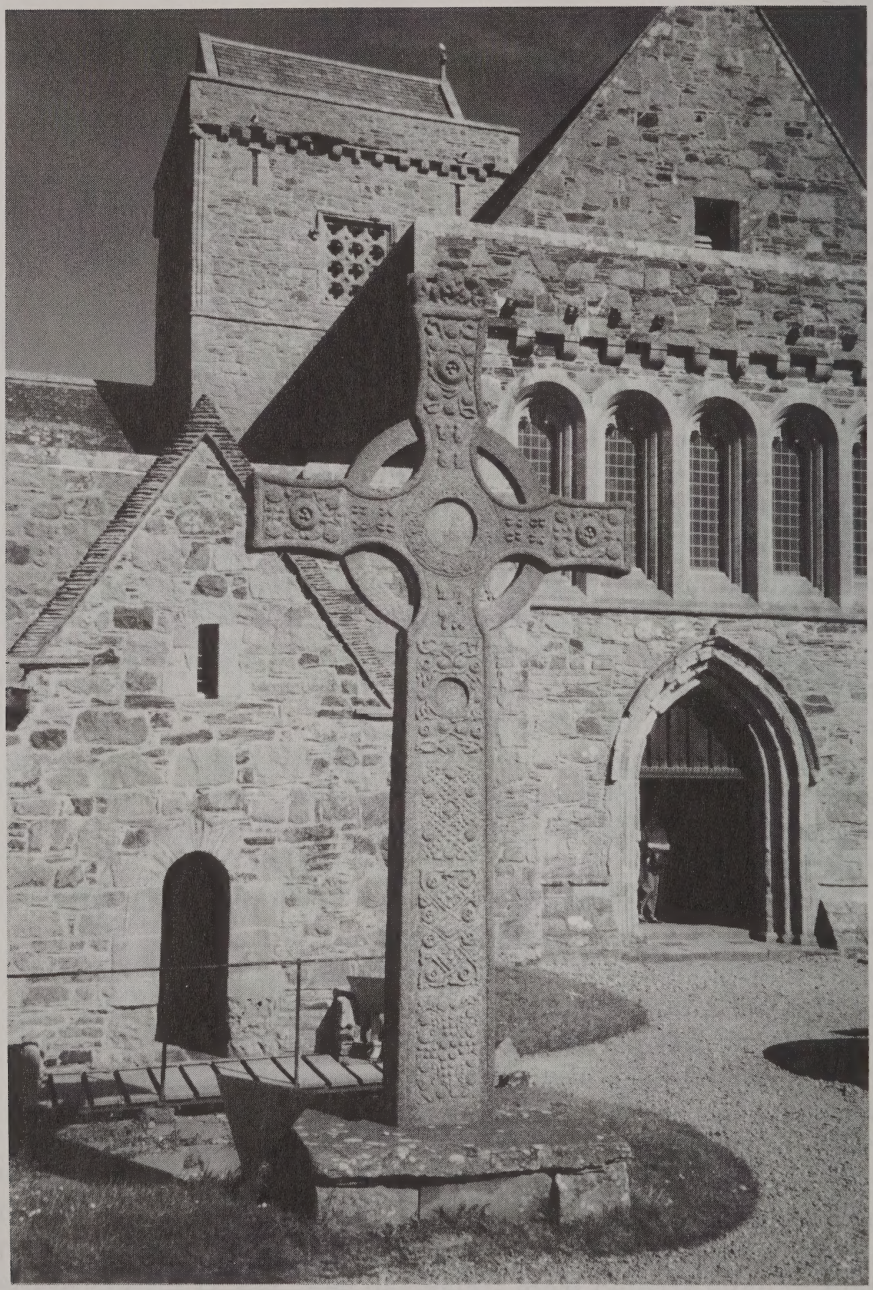
From Lindisfarne we traveled across the dramatically beautiful highlands of Scotland and across to the island of Mull. There a small boat would ferry us to the sacred island of Iona. There St. Columba was blown ashore in his frail *curragh*, or coracle, some 1,400 years ago.

Walking on Iona, cut off from the mainline of our everyday preoccupations and surrounded by a vast immensity of sea and sky, it's impossible, even for those of little faith, not to feel God's presence everywhere. It's impossible, too, standing under the arms of Iona's intricately carved High Crosses soaring twelve or fourteen feet high, not to feel the comfort and certainty of God's protection.

On the day that we trekked the length of the island, however, I found that at foot level the blessings and teachings of the holy ground could be rigorous and demanding. We started at the Abbey, in front of St. Martin's Cross–the magnificent, thousand-year-old High Cross named for St. Martin, a fourth century Roman soldier who, one freezing winter night, took off and gave his warm overcoat to a disabled person he met on the road. From there we hiked, in reflective silence, through the gentle ruins of the thirteenth century nunnery where countless women lived and prayed together for some 300 years, through the small village, and across the common sheep-grazing ground of the local crofters and farmers.

Nearing the last leg of the journey, we paused briefly as Marcus Losack, our tireless shepherd, advised us that we were approaching the roughest and steepest part of our trek–the foothills that led down to Columba's Bay. He gently reminded us that persistence, especially when the going gets rough, is a crucial component of the spiritual journey. I heard what he said, and I also understood as I looked around at my companions on the path, how essential it is to travel in the company of believers: of the angels and saints, pilgrims and seekers, visible and invisible, who are always with us.

On the southern tip of the island, where St. Columba is said to have arrived from Ireland in 563, we paused to pray and to gaze in awe at the spectacle of sea and sky (impossible to tell where the one began and the other left off). We searched for just the right stone among the rich treasury of



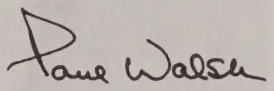
Paul Walsh

St. Martin's Cross and the Abbey on Iona, Scotland.

rocks and pebbles that made up the beach to remind us back home of Iona's stark beauty and all it represents.

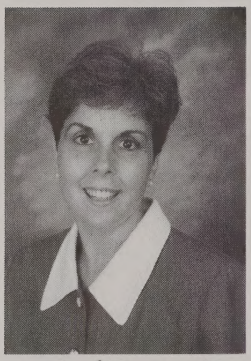
I picked a beautiful round gray stone with an intricately intertwined green serpentine pattern to connect me with the hidden holy island in the depths of my being. I imagine that inner island, like Lindisfarne and Iona, as being saturated with the divine presence. Perhaps with persistence, I can get to spend more and more time there.

God between you and all harm,



Paul Walsh

FROM THE EDITOR



The preacher's words made me think. "The root of the word integrity is shared with the word integer, and an integer is a whole number, a number that is complete in itself." At home I peeked in the dictionary and read synonyms like: entire, whole, complete, integrated. All of these related words have to do with bringing together parts, whether it be in a mathematical calculation, a society fraught by prejudice, or in a moral vision of how all living beings are to share the earth we all inhabit.

Most of what I see and read each day reminds me of the broken pieces, the fragments, the half-done jobs, and jagged edges of life. These things are a part of life, but so too is the desire for wholeness, for the unsurpassed glimpse of a full autumn moon, for the feeling of ease with another person, for the sense some people exude of being content in who they are and in what they do with their days.

This month's feature interview is with Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie, Chaplain of the United States Senate, a man of integrity and honor. During our interview he spoke of his work with joy and conviction, and just before I left he asked about me. I told him that my five-year-old daughter was in the hospital and I was bone-weary from long weeks of monitoring her chemotherapy treatments for leukemia. He said, "This may be a hotel lobby, but God is here. May I pray for you, for Megan, and for your family?" He took my hand and confidently prayed. Three days later, by overnight delivery, I received a package containing a copy of Dr. Ogilvie's book, *Conversation with God,* and a letter telling me he was con-

tinuing to pray. A week later one of his staff members phoned me to see if my daughter had been released from the hospital, which she had. These are the integrated, whole actions of caring. Read this month's *Questions & Answers* to learn more of how Dr. Ogilvie brings prayer into the political arena of Washington, D.C.

In *A Transforming Experience*, Susan Codeglia tells of how a year-long pen pal relationship helped her to come home to faith. Marianna Neal, a regular retreatant at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, describes her special place to seek inward peace in *Spiritual Community*, and Willa Smail confesses he is bound to the land out of love in *Spirituality & Service*. Henry Stark visits The Seeker's Trust in London and learns of a disciplined way to become a "link" in prayer for the healing of the world. Joseph A. Burkart's skepticism turns into sacred awe in the hot, holy heat of Arizona's high desert, and Rabbi Allen Maller shares a service of healing from Temple Akiba that may be used to benefit other faith communities to support their suffering members.

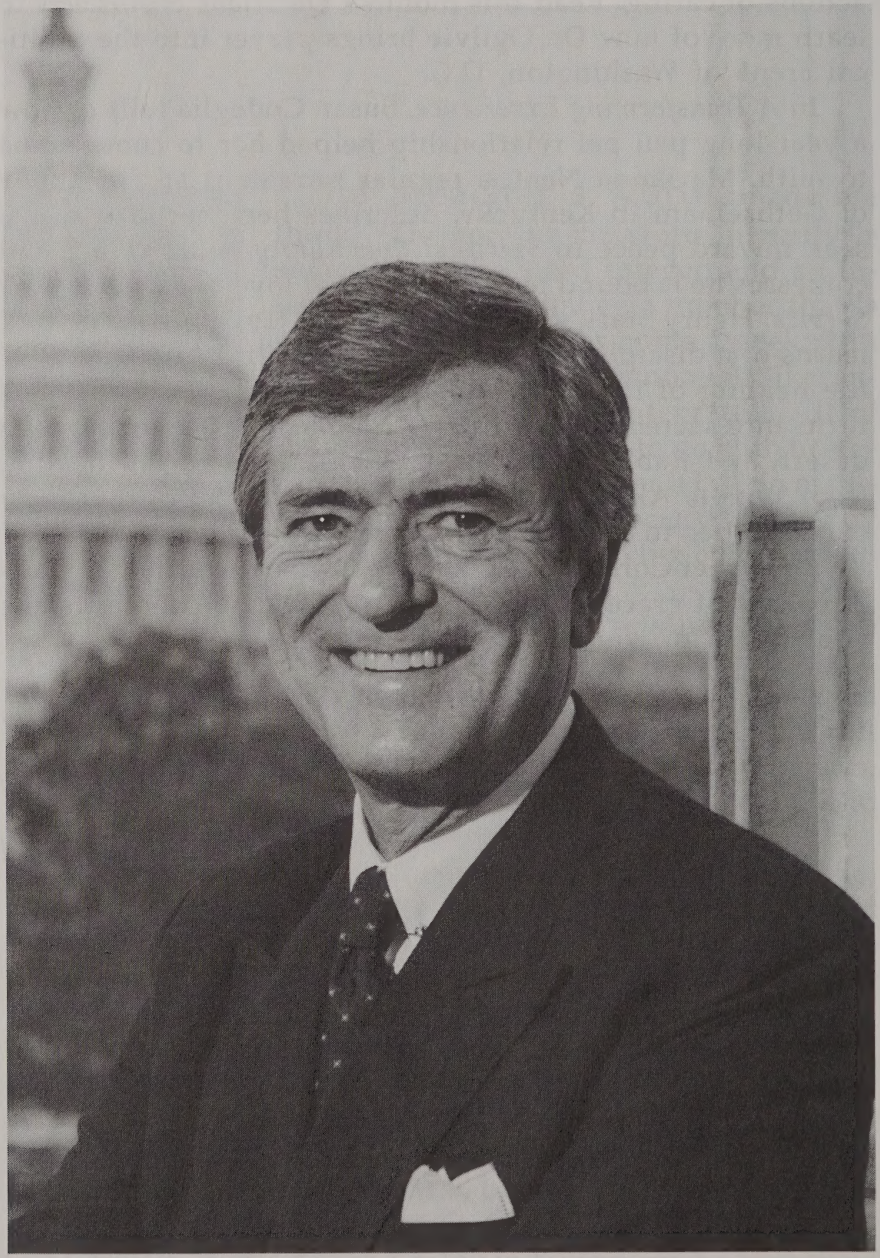
Poet Chet Corey writes, "I have been overturned . . . may 'breakers of grace' roll upon me." This issue should slake your thirst for wholeness. So I pray.

Blessings,

Rebecca Laird

Rebecca Laird

Lloyd John Ogilvie



PRAYER AND OUR POLITICIANS
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Lloyd John Ogilvie

I arrived on schedule at the Nassau Inn in Princeton. Once inside the lobby I immediately recognized Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie, the Chaplain of the United States Senate and formerly the senior pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian Church. I walked toward this polished and stately man who is author of more than twenty books and was a long-time television host of the series, "Let God Love You." I expected him to be gracious and professional, but I was surprised when his face softened into genuine kindness. I sensed immediately that this interview was not just another engagement to be checked off of his list of things to-do. He was present to the moment. I began to anticipate spending the coming hour listening to someone whose integrity surrounds him like a second skin. Knowing that Dr. Ogilvie, a person of positive influence, is available to the members of the United States Senate, their families, and their staffs, left me with a renewed hope that many elected to high office desire to serve the common good, and that is news from Washington, D.C. that many of us have been longing to hear.

Sacred Journey: Tell me about your "parish." Whom do you serve and how?

Lloyd Ogilvie: I think the key word that would express my response to the opportunity of being Chaplain would be gratitude. I am very grateful to have the privilege of serving nearly 6,000 people. I have quite a diverse parish. I have one hundred senators and their families and their staffs. We have approached the chaplaincy by developing pro-

grams for each of the sections, first of all the senators, then for the senators' spouses, then for the senators' staff, and then for the support team that has responsibility for technical services of the Capitol. We have found that the most effective way of impacting the lives of the Senate at all of these various levels is to do Bible studies, and it is interesting that the objective word of the Scriptures is most effective in bringing renewed understanding and insight and direction for what they are responsible to do.

On Tuesdays we have a Bible study for the senators' spouses. Then every Wednesday morning there is a Senate prayer breakfast where the senators share their own pilgrimages—some aspect of their faith and their own journeys in relationship to God. Then on Thursday morning, I have a Bible study for the Senators themselves. This has been a very exciting study for me. I've done an Old Testament study, the heroes and heroines of the Old Testament, and New Testament studies, from the Book of Romans and other Pauline letters, and we're now beginning a study on the Holy Spirit. We have an hour set aside for this and we begin right on time, and I know for sure that when the clock hits 1:00 P.M. I have to be finished, and they leave.

Is there a core group of people who attend these studies?

Yes. The senator's Bible study started with just a few and has grown to a large number. I promised them I would never talk about the size nor about their names, and that has given them a sense of anonymity. They don't mind my sharing with the American people that they have a Bible study, or what the content is, or anything about that. They just don't ever want to feel that we've used their spiritual experience for any kind of self-aggrandizement. The rule that I use in terms of what I can talk about is that I only talk about what the senators publicly have said.

You've got one of the toughest constituencies to serve. How do you call for commitment among people who have position, responsibility, and power?

It is a marvelous experience to take people who have arrived at where they are because of education and tradition. They have reached a place where they believe that they are among the elite; they are counted among the hundred most powerful people in the world. To communicate to them that something, someone, is missing from their lives, is the challenge and the essence of the chaplaincy. My job isn't to negate their wonderful growth, development, or position as the basis of presenting the Gospel, but rather to affirm that and then say, but there's so much more to living and to leadership. I've tried to define supernatural leadership as being endowed with the very special gifts of leadership given by the Spirit of God: knowledge, wisdom, discernment, vision. These are really manifestations of the presence of the Spirit of God within us. To ask for and receive the empowering of God to lead is the secret. When the challenges grow, the demands are high, andthe load is heavy, this is the time to talk about what it means to receive supernatural power in leaders. In the weekly Bible study we talk about this insistently. I don't try and tell senators how to vote. I try and help them come into a profound relationship with God in which they can receive discernment. I call them to God's plumb line of justice and righteousness. I encourage them to ask the question, "If we trusted God with all our hearts, and sought with all our minds to know and do God's will, what would we do on this specific issue?"

Many of the senators have entered into a caring covenant with each other. We covenant to start and end every day with prayer so it becomes a consistent habit, a creative habit.

We begin each day with an unreserved commitment of our lives to Christ.

We invite Christ to fill us with his Spirit, and our minds to think his thoughts, our emotions to express his love, and our will to discern and do his will.

We focus on the specific opportunities and challenges of the relationships and responsibilities of the day ahead, and surrender each of these to Christ and ask for the supernatural power,

wisdom, and guidance for our leadership.

We pray for each other by name.

We have all of the senators listed on a small card. We are to pray for twenty senators each weekday, so that by Friday we will have covered the entire Senate in prayer. Those involved in the Bible study pray in particular for those who share the covenant, because they know more of what each of these senators is going through. During the day, when we are brought to each others' minds, or if we learn of a special need, we will accept these as nudges to intercede for each other, and that has really bound these men and women together.

If you ask each senator to pray for every other senator each week, in many ways you are asking them to pray for people who may be their political enemies.

Exactly. I am asking them to love their enemies. And there are issues about which they develop quite acrimonious spirits. And yet there is a deep friendship that exists among some of those who are political adversaries. It is very interesting to see. We've tried very hard to teach a sense of stability in the midst of the procedures of the Senate and they speak of seeking God's will and direction in this.

You obviously have a great love for the senators and empathy for what they face day-to-day. You don't show an ounce of cynicism toward the political workplace.

There is an intellectual conviction that undergirds my work. Martin Luther said, "The very finest few should be reserved and educated not for the office of preaching, but for government." In preaching, the Holy Spirit does all the work, whereas in government one must exercise reason in a shadowy realm where ambiguity and uncertainty are the orders of the day.

I enjoy telling the senators that they have the highest calling and that I am there as their coach, spiritual encour-

ager, and enabler. I ask them not to think of the clergy as the highest calling. It is a basic conviction of mine that the Church exists for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, and politics is a ministry; government is a ministry, and my task is, as a pastor, to help people exercise their ministries in the world where the issues that affect humankind are being decided.

What about the political power in such a place? How do prayer and politics mix in these senators' lives?

The only way that a man or a woman of faith can survive in a political world is to know his or her power is in the living Lord and not in the structures or in the personalities or in the political process. Once a person knows that he or she is to be a riverbed for the flow of the Spirit of God rather than the river, there is great freedom. If we truly fear God with awe and wonder, in the true meaning of Biblical fear, then we have nothing and no one else to fear. When you get to the place where you know you are accountable to the Lord more than to a political party or a certain position, then there is a shifting of the epicenter and a full change in the person's security system. We are in the midst of the growing quest for integrity in politics. I'm pleased to know the senators have passed the Character Counts legislation for America, and they're trying very hard to live out these character traits themselves. As I talk with people across the country and tell them that the Senate has passed Character Counts legislation, they say, "Why didn't we hear about this?"

The media seems intent on digging for stories of corruption and scandal. What do you wish were being reported on the six o'clock news?

Even though we must maintain a high level of confidentiality about the spiritual reawakening that is taking place in the Senate, I wish the American people could know how seriously senators take their relationship with God and how consistently many of them pray for guidance and direction

in the affairs of our nation. There are truly great men and women serving in the Senate who love God and who are profoundly patriotic about this nation. The most encouraging thing that I see is that many of the senators are returning to a key term for God that was used by our forefathers and foremothers in the establishment of this nation. People came to this continent seeking a land where God would be the Sovereign and not any king or queen or prince, and they sought a land where they could recognize God as the Sovereign of the land. When you seek to live under the sovereignty of God, that means fresh experiences of his grace sustain you in your responsibilities, and this also demands a constant allegiance to his judgment and his justice. We have come through about sixty years of relativism in America and the weary flight of the burden of relativism has come home to roost. We are a nation where we do not have absolutes, where the ten commandments have gone out of style, and where the eleventh commandment, Jesus' commandment to love, is depicted as irrelevant in relationships. I think we're in a battle right now in American history between relativism and the absolutes, and we've raised up a generation of people almost totally devoid of the absolutes, and, as a result of that, morality, integrity, honesty, the basics which have come down in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, and are part of the very core of America, are often absent.

How do you keep yourself rooted and grounded? One of the things we like to do in *Sacred Journey* is to emphasize that each of us individually, regardless of position or title, has to root our life somewhere, in spiritual practices and prayer.

Eight words are the motto of the chaplaincy: *Without God, we can't. Without us, God won't.* I really believe this and to move into discussion of my own personal spiritual walk is directly related to that because I really believe that without God I can't do anything of any significance, and yet I have discovered that God does use people to get his work done.

For me, the secret is in my own personal devotional life. I take a period of time every morning in which I go through

nine steps of prayer, and I use Scripture as a basis of each of these steps. Some of this I have put in my little book, *Conversations with God.* In preparation, I remind myself that prayer begins with God. God calls us into prayer. The desire to pray is the result of God's movement in our lives rather than our quest for him. A promise through Isaiah says: "Before they call I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." And we know that God is always pleading with us. The key theological word with me is *prevenient*, the "beforehandness" of God.

Then I use the Psalms in praise of the Lord, and go through a disciplined study of the Psalms to tune my heart to God's praise, and I follow the discipline of confession believing that the Greek meaning of the word confession—"to say after"—is applicable for our lives. We say after God what is true about our lives. To confess is to allow God to reach into the depths of our beings and expose those things and then to say them after him. This is a liberating experience.

Then thanksgiving follows that naturally out of awe and wonder that God would, by grace, love and accept us, not only to expose what's wrong, but then to forgive even before we ask to be forgiven. And then I take a period of silence and try, best as I can, to spread out before God my relationships and responsibilities. I think of intercession in terms of relationships and supplication in terms of responsibilities. I spread out before God my relationships, beginning first of all with my family, and then with the people with whom I work. My intercession includes not only the senators and their families and staffs, but the nation as a whole. I pray for the President, Vice President, the Cabinet, those of the Supreme Court—some of them are close friends. I pray for them as a joy. Sometimes I take a walk during the intercession portion of my prayer time, and it's fun to walk around the Capitol and pray for the senators.

I have a volunteer in each of the one hundred offices of the senators, and we meet together consistently to receive any prayer concerns. Once a week, every Tuesday afternoon, we send out an e-mail to those one hundred people asking them to respond with any prayer needs and to come and see

me personally with confidential requests. By Wednesday morning when I meet with the senators at their prayer breakfast, I know what the prayer needs are from this whole community. One day as I walked to work, one of the policemen by the name of Dave said to me, "Is this the morning the senators meet for prayer?" and I said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, I can't tell you what it is because it's too private, but I'm in serious trouble. Would you ask the senators to pray, just have them pray for Dave." The following week Dave stopped me again to say, "You know, it worked out. Thanks so much. Tell the senators that their prayers were answered." It is fun to see the light in the eyes of the senators, knowing that their prayers for each other, their staffs, and the policemen who are guarding their lives have been answered.

In my own prayer practice I then take time to pray for guidance. That's "tomorrow-time," when I think of the challenges before me that need creative thinking from God. Then the next step would be commitment. Now here's the Hebrew meaning of the word commitment: to roll over, as if to roll something off one's back onto the back of a stronger person. The Greek meaning of the word commitment is: To invest and place in the care of another a valued possession and then to have it be kept with interest by the other person. So I roll it off my back onto the Lord and ask for his care. Then the last step is the empowering: to ask for those supernatural gifts to be able to do what I am called to do during the day.

Also, I am a part of an accountability group of other leaders. I have been in an accountability group ever since I became a Christian in college. It is very important for any leader to have a small group of no larger than six people, no smaller than three, to whom you can be accountable.

As it was nearing noon, the restaurant where we had claimed a quiet table for coffee and conversation became noisy. I walked Dr. Ogilvie to the door where his lunch host was waiting. Our time together ended, but as Dr. Ogilvie writes in his book: Prayer always ends with a "To be continued . . ." The opportunity to enter into conversation with God remains open-ended.

Journey to Connection

Susan Codeglia

It is hard to believe that only a year ago I wrote the following to my friend, Rev. Albert Colbourne: "I don't believe in God, as you define him." Although I was raised Presbyterian, I had sadly lost my connection to God during my youth, and I had never been baptized. It wasn't until a few years ago that I resumed my search for that connection. After experiencing several catastrophic events, including the death of my mother, I began moving toward a more spiritual life

I met Rev. Colbourne while he was a visiting priest at my chapel, St. Francis of the Mountains in Fallen Leaf Lake, South Lake Tahoe, California, which was built in 1921. I first saw the chapel when I was fourteen and have always felt that there was something special about it. It has an almost sacred feeling to it which has been felt both by modern day parishioners as well as the native Washoe Indians who lived on the land many years ago. My true spiritual journey began several years ago when I started attending church services there.

The day I met Rev. Colbourne, I must have been wearing a neon sign that said, "Help me! I am spiritually malnourished." He offered to send me some reading material and

Susan Codeglia is an aspiring writer. She lives in South Lake Tahoe, CA, and is currently working as a legal secretary. She has a degree in Early Childhood Education, and is a member of the Altar Guild of her local chapel, St. Francis of the Mountains, in Fallen Leaf Lake, CA.

Susan Codeglia and Fr. Colbourne on Baptism Day

held true to his word. Thus began a faithful and powerful pen pal relationship.

I asked a multitude of questions and read several books. I wrote feverishly in my journal and analyzed my dreams. I began attending church faithfully, learned to meditate and pray, and I joined a spiritual journey group. I also experienced two revelations; both were clearly gifts from God. The first showed me how easy it is to believe, and the second showed me how to have faith. I also had to battle my ego which had worked rather hard and quite successfully to keep me from opening my heart and letting God in. But slowly the walls came down and I found acceptance. All along the journey, Father Colbourne was there to guide me with his intellect, patience, and love, never pushing me beyond my own momentum. One day I wrote and told him that "I believe in God . . . I know there is a God." In that same letter, I asked about getting baptized. He knew I was ready and our mutual enthusiasm was unmistakable. And so it happened, on a September Sunday, I accepted Christ into my life with a full immersion baptism in Fallen Leaf Lake, California.

I look back now on my journey and see that I had been searching for God and the Spirit outside of myself. I had attended many different churches (what I referred to as church du jour) in an attempt to make a connection with the higher power. But the connection to God didn't happen until I learned that God is not a "thing," nor a "place." Living with God is a way of life and God lives within. I also had to learn to have faith and learn to live "as if." Once I opened my heart, God was there to love me.

My favorite movie has always been "The Wizard of Oz." I smile when I think of the irony that the premise of the movie parallels my own journey to a connection with God. Just like Dorothy, I traveled far in search of what was at my doorstep all along. God has always been there for me, but I had been looking elsewhere.

It has been a wonderful journey for which I am grateful. I look forward to my relationship with God and whatever he has planned for me. As Father Colbourne once said, "It's not the destination itself, but the journey along the way."

The Abbey of Gethsemani

Marianna K. Neal

Ten miles south of Bardstown, Kentucky on Route 31 is a small sign that simply points to the left and reads, "Trappist." If you follow it for a couple of miles, you will see rising in the distance the bell tower of The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani. Monks have lived, prayed, and worked here since forty-five of them arrived from France in 1848. The monastery literally takes you into another world, one of peace and quiet that almost seems surreal. It offers both visitors and retreatants the opportunity to be apart, to once again discover the spirit of God within each of us. I have visited the monastery for almost twenty years. There I experience a comfort and peace that I find nowhere else.

Much of the two thousand acres of Gethsemani is inside the enclosure, an area reserved for monks and an occasional retreatant. The old stone walls serve as reminders of barriers that are slowly being lifted. Today many former walls have either fallen or been dismantled, yet there are walls, some recently constructed, that preserve the silence the monks came here to find.

The old Gothic church has been remodeled since its completion in 1866. Then there were numerous arches, pillars, and altars throughout. Today it is as simple as the monk's lifestyle. Stained-glass windows line the stark, white brick walls allowing light to stream through and paint

Marianna Neal is a retired teacher and volunteers her time to the American Cancer Society. She lives in Fairborn, OH with her husband Bill. They have three sons.

dancing images on the stone floor that leads to a simple, unadorned altar.

Because of the predictability of the monks' schedule, it is easy to arrive in time to attend one of their prayer services, called "The Liturgy of the Hours." The monks' songs of praise begin at 3:15 A.M. with Vigils and end with Compline or night prayer at 7:30 P.M. Attending Vigils (despite how tired I might feel) is my favorite time of the day. The church is dark except for one or two candles or small lights, the air is crisp, and the chanting seems to lift me out of myself as it opens my day up to God. It may be 3:15, most of the world may still be comfortable in their beds, but I feel alive and shrouded in a special way with God's love.

The outside view of the church before sunrise is magnificent. Small ground lights mark the way toward a towering structure whose only visible light shines through stained-glass windows. It is a sight almost defying words; it is breathtaking.

I return to Gethsemani for a week-long retreat every November. The oppressive heat of the Kentucky summer has passed and autumn beauty calls me to renewal. All around I see a rainbow of magnificent colors calling me to a new appreciation of the world I so often take for granted. In the quiet outdoors I am most aware of God's presence–in the trees, the clouds that drift slowly by and the distant hills. The God that I tend to overlook in my daily life comes alive for me at Gethsemani and calls me to once again renew my resolution to simplify my life.

Church bells mark the hour of the day and are used to call the monks to prayer. Even now, monks working in the fields and unable to come to the church will pause to pray at the ringing of the bell. Recently, several people who have chosen to live near the monastery also allow these bells to remind them to turn to God throughout the day in prayer. For them the bells are an outward sign of God's continual presence in their lives.

During my time at Gethsemani each autumn the bells guide my life. I follow the monks' schedule rising at 3:15 A.M. and going to sleep at 8:00 P.M. The first day is difficult but my body and mind soon adjust to being in a place apart,

Marianna K. Neal

Former Guestmaster, Fr. Jacob.

a spot that fills me with a special calm that I only experience at the monastery. I return year after year to allow this peace to permeate my being.

Thomas Merton (Father Louis), one of Gethsemani's best-known monks, spent the last couple years of his life living in a hermitage that still stands at Gethsemani. It is used especially by the monks for private retreats and is behind the enclosure. There are a few other hermitages hidden on the property, isolated from the world, where monks live in almost total isolation. Today you can visit Merton's grave. The simplicity of the scene is reflected in the unadorned white crosses that mark each grave. As I sit on the grass reflecting on my life I cannot help but remember Merton's words from *The Sign of Jonas*, "You do not see . . . life in perspective if you do not look at your abbey from the fields."

Father Matthew, the guesthouse chaplain, speaks for about twenty minutes every evening after Compline to visitors and retreatants. The stories, wisdom, and laughter of this priest, who is originally from Boston and spent several years as a hermit in New Zealand, are well worth listening to. It is a marvelous way to end a day of peace and prayer.

I think of the word "peace" when I reflect on what I have found at Gethsemani, but often the silence is anything but peaceful. My time alone there usually causes me to reflect on my life as at no other time. My nights may seem long and painful as I work through issues that my silence has raised to consciousness. I spend the dark hours trying to understand what makes me who I am, why I have made the mistakes I have repeatedly made, and the unconditional love of God for me. It is God's love that leads me through my pain and eventually brings me, each time I return to the monastery, to a deeper experience of peace.

Gethsemani helps me reflect on my own life and values. I go there when I'm angry, hurt, or confused, simply to be alone, relax, and face my challenges. When life seems overwhelming I feel called to seek its peace and strength. Several years ago after cancer surgery, I went to the abbey searching for ways to recover not only physically, but mentally and spiritually. While there, I spent a lot of time in silence and prayer questioning what had happened to me.

Gradually I began to understand and release my fears. I started seeing my life differently and discovering a deeper appreciation of all that I had been taking for granted. The lessons I learn at Gethsemani continue to change my life in amazing ways. It is truly a place apart, whether I stop for an afternoon visit or remain for a retreat that lasts several days.

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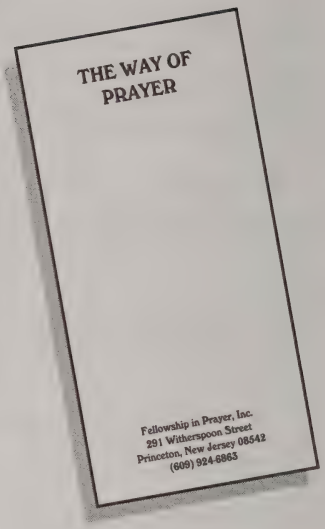

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Please use this space to tell us your thoughts about this publication, *Sacred Journey.*

The Slave

Willa Smail

Like many before me, I am a slave. Our Constitution forbids this institution, and most people believe slavery a dead issue. However, reality often overrides legality.

I am bound to an overwhelmingly powerful mistress who is quite charitable to her servants. She feeds me. She clothes me. She shelters me. No lash scars my back. Calloused hands are the marks of her fetters. I cannot escape.

Once, I did run away and avoided her for five years. She didn't pursue me. This was not necessary. She knew that I would return in due time. No resistance was given. She is the mightiest of Sirens, and her allure conquered my soul. I am just an ol' country boy indentured to the good mother earth.

My father instilled a love for the soil in my youth. Some of my first memories are those of my father as he plowed a sandy hillside from daylight till dark. His horse–a mare named Sally–drew the plow that he guided down the rows. The roaring of the heel sweep as it undercut the weak roots and the sweet succulence of the moist earth filled my senses to the point of ecstacy. I thought Daddy to be a king, the lines around his neck were the reins of the royal chariot which Sally pulled.

It was my joy to stand at the top of this sandhill and survey this kingdom. Before me stood a field of corn. At the bottom of the hill was a tomato patch. Daddy would some-

Willa Smail is a happy farmer who writes a little in his spare time.

times cease his tillage in order that Sally could rest a few minutes. I would race up to his side at these occasions. He would explain the merits of honest toil to an appreciative son. I grew to love the land and the God who had bestowed these happy times upon me.

I was therefore very disappointed when my father quit farming. He found what he believed to be an easier living and continued at this job till he died.

Our family continued on the homeplace, and I ranged across the countryside–delighted by the sights and sounds that surrounded me.

Yet, as my teenage years approached, my ramblings decreased as my parents introduced me to the work ethic. It was desirable that I should be less idle and more gainfully occupied. I did not protest, for those were the days when you did as told with little rebuttal. The money was welcome to my empty pockets as well.

Of all the jobs I ever had, picking tomatoes was by far the most detested. This hatred developed when my brother and I opened a small weekend fruit and vegetable stand. I had to pick tomatoes to supply the stand but did not enjoy it in the least.

As I aged I found easier jobs, which at the same time, fattened my wallet. I was consequently spared the indignities of further tomato harvests for several years. But my good fortune quickly evaporated when a neighbor came knocking on our door one very early summer morning. This fellow had planted two acres in the preceding spring, and it was now harvest time. The sun hadn't risen when my father roused me. After a quick breakfast, I was off to the tomato patch.

With the exception of Sundays, this was repeated daily. The tomatoes had to be gently picked and carefully wiped free of sand before being packed in bushel baskets. Each basket was filled until it weighed fifty pounds, but they seemed to weigh a ton before I got them loaded on the truck. I had green stained hands with which I wiped the sweat from my face. This resulted in a stinging rash. Slave wages for slave labor. I loathed tomatoes and yearned to be free.

I was shockingly reminded of those days as I drove to-

ward Houston in the mid-seventies. To my right were people working in a truck patch. They were picking tomatoes. I glanced at the suitcase next to me and relished the fact it contained the college diploma which should hopefully procure a job. Quickly employed, I set out to made the most of the easier life that my father desired for himself and me.

Regrettably, this did not continue. I found myself to be a miserable soul in the urban environment. I realized that I was an ol' country boy who felt trapped by self-inflicted bars. It is not that city life is bad. It simply was that I was so ill suited to it. I reflected upon earlier times in the country. I planted a garden. Misery grew.

I grew to love the land and the God who had bestowed these happy times upon me.

My father had always told me to work at whatever I might as long as it made me happy. I was thinking about this as I visited a coworker. I recall that it was a wonderfully glorious spring day. After regaling him with my misery, his impromptu forwardness surprised me. My friend sat quietly–his back facing me–as he filed his daily reports. Suddenly, he whirled in his chair, his right index finger in my face, and announced reverently–"The good Lord put you on this earth to be happy. If you're miserable, it ain't his fault." I felt that a missile had pierced my soul. Never had the meaning of life been presented to me in such a clear, precise manner. This man was no friend. Indeed, he was a prophet.

I remember the plight of those who failed to heed the warnings of prophets and resolved to take appropriate action. My destiny lay in the country. I bowed to my benevolent mistress.

It is now seventeen years since I left Houston. My house rests on a sand hill. Near it is a tomato patch–beautiful tasty delights hang luxuriantly from caged vines. A good customer says these are the best damned tomatoes he ever ate. I agree to the taste. I no longer consider them to be accursed.

However, this is not the highlight of my life. My few years in Houston revealed a great deal. I have a much more ex-

panded view of this world and greatly appreciate that fact. I realize that the easier life my father chose was, in fact, better for him, and that I, myself, should seek my own best destiny.

I own no horse. I till the soil with a tractor. The fragrance of the warm, moist, freshly plowed earth replenishes my soul. I savor the cool evening breeze–truly the breath of this land. I have found that the easiest life is the contentment which I have sought since my youth. And it is the subjection to be content with who I am which has set me free to wander the fields once more, very grateful to the God who molded them and quite especially so to his prophet who drew me from a spiritual drought into the watershed of life. Elatedly bound to this small plot of ground, I now know that freedom dwells in the spirit. It is good to be home.

Desert Feet

Joseph A. Burkart, Jr.

During the second residency of a spirituality program with the Shalem Institute in Washington, D.C., our leader asked us to form a line. We were going to practice "soft-shoeing the earth," as he called it. My first suspicion was of some kind of New Age *woo woo* and I felt my resistance skyrocket. As he continued to explain what we would be doing I went deeper into my shutdown mode. "We are practicing what it is like to be gentle with the earth and to walk as softly and gently as we are able upon it." We formed a line and in our Nikes, Keds, socks, and bare feet, off we went, hands on the other's shoulders, stepping ever so lightly on the tiles of the social room at the Trinitarian Seminary in Silver Spring. A diabolical, fleeting image of goose-stepping German troops went through my mind. God, I was having a hard time. But humor has a way of swooping in when needed. My Australian friend took me aside that evening and mentioned that he never saw anything funnier than me in that exercise, trying to be gracious, but hating every minute of it. Three years later he was still laughing at my ungainly awkwardness and "extreme disorientation."

This past October our family took a trip to Arizona. Ostensibly, the purpose was to see a friend in medical work on

Joseph A."Tony" Burkart is a psychotherapist in private practice. He is a Roman Catholic lay person and interested in the interplay between Buddhist and Christian contemplatives. He lives with his wife and son on the coast of Maine.

Robert F Campbell

the Navajo Reservation. Secretly, I'd never seen the desert and wondered what drew the early contemplatives and those of this age. Landing in Phoenix, we rented our car and rapidly headed out of the city and toward the high desert. I knew something was gestating but hadn't a clue what it was.

We were in the desert about a week, had reunited with our friend, and decided it was time to check out some of the Anasazi ruins. I was deeply interested in this ancient people but still felt reserve.

At Batatakin, the Navajo National Monument, cracks in my resolve started to appear. As we walked down the quarter mile path of the overlook I could sense something odd. When we reached the overlook, we strained our eyes some three miles across the canyon to what looked like a Lilliputian village but was really an incredibly large complex of living structures. I felt the hush, the roar of something quiet and grounded. There must have been eight or ten people present, all silent, no nervous chatter, simply present, peering across the canyon, absorbed, leaving without sound.

A couple of days later we went hiking in the remote Bullet Canyon area. We descended the canyon and walked its bottom for several miles. We came upon well-preserved, nine-hundred-year-old ruins built of wood and stone: a watch tower and cliff structures once used for overnight stops. About an hour later we came upon what our friend thought was a structure of worship and a small village. It was here, I remember, that something changed. I found myself cautiously walking, jarred by the sound of the sandy, rocky desert crust under my feet. I remember feeling the desire to walk ever so gently, like stalking the Holy. I felt a nudging, an invitation to take off my shoes as I was upon Holy ground, which I did. For about an hour, as if this heightened sense was most natural, I remained still, silent, transfixed.

After returning home I kept thinking of Joseph Campbell's assertion that the heart of mythological and religious experience is that the outside appearance may seem unreal but the inside experience is very real. What appeared to me to be a useless if not comical exercise in a tiled room

in a seminary basement became one of the seminal shifting-of-the-heart experiences in the Arizona desert. Perhaps I will walk more gently now, with a little less arrogance. Who is this God of surprises who we are told sees everything and all as Holy?

Robert F. Campbell

Joining the Circle

Henry Stark

I have been interested in spiritual healing since my very serious jaw surgery three years ago. I believe that my wife and I actually assisted my surgeon through a month-long program of healing, focused meditations. I subsequently read about an organization, The Seekers Trust, located in Kent, England. For seventy years this small group has met in healing prayer circles to pray several times daily following the example of Charles Simpson, their founder.

The whole idea fascinated me. Believing in the healing potential of prayer, I was interested in their philosophy and the mechanics of public group healing. Their brochure had left me curious and with a desire to participate. During a recent holiday my wife and I spent three days at their headquarters.

Before we arrived I let my anticipation run ahead of me. How was I going to sit in a prayer circle with five others and in thirty minutes help heal people all around the world? The words "inadequate, unqualified, presumptuous" leapt into my consciousness.

When I arrived at the estate about an hour out of London, I immediately discussed my concerns with the Honourable Secretary, the leader of the organization. She assured me that the only thing I need do was to sit quietly. Guests were more than welcome to participate in the prayer

Henry Stark lives in Rocky Hill, CT and writes regularly for Sacred Journey. *To contact The Seekers Trust write: The Honourable Secretary, The Seekers Trust, The Close, Addington, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5B6, Great Britain.*

circles. She put me at ease and I no longer felt that I might be plunged into a series of arcane rituals. With a little more confidence my wife and I signed up for the 10:30 prayer circle the next morning.

At 10:15 we arrived in a small chapel where the six participants gathered to quiet themselves and review the format. The leader gave us some basic directions. We were to exit this chapel in the proper order, preferably, male, female, male, etc. In an adjacent chapel we were to follow each other around a six-sided altar and approach our chairs from the right. When we exited we would leave our chairs from the left. In a little cubicle in front of us would be a small amount of blessed water which we were to drink together. A prescribed set of written prayers was hanging from a book on the left side of the chair and we were to say these prayers aloud, slowly, quietly, and in unison. After the first set of prayers the leader would read about thirty names of people who had contacted the organization for help. During this time we were to pray and meditate without crossing our arms or legs so as not to interfere with the free flow of positive energy. Then another set of prayers, a quiet pause, and we would file out of that chapel and return to the first.

The regular participants in the circles were mostly retired or middle-aged people who were living on the property in apartments that had been provided at minimal cost. In return for the savings, a commitment was made to participate in three healing circles a day, five days a week. In addition, many volunteered to work in the office or on the grounds.

The Seekers Trust was started in 1925 and exactly the same prayer procedures have been followed every day since then. It began when a spiritual embodiment of a doctor appeared in a dream to a "sensitive," Charles Simpson. The doctor counseled that together they would try, "to heal the sick, to try to lift people from despair and distress, and to teach people how to pray." The Seekers' literature says, "We are here to help you. To take away fear, to try to teach you the power of prayer and what it can do. To give you that firm strength, by the knowledge that you are not fighting the battle alone . . ."

A basic assumption was posited by the doctor–that prayer, to be successful, needs a lot of practice. People participating regularly in the Prayer Circles would become expert. He wanted to develop and strengthen the method to make the contact stronger, "lifting us to the loftier planes where our highest aspirations, our most ardent prayers, are heard and answered."

A simple analogy may be illustrative. A wireless transmitter can send out radio waves all over the world. A receiver tuned to exactly that wavelength can pick up the wave. Nothing would happen if the receiver was tuned to a different wavelength or had not been turned on. The Harmony Prayer Chapel serves as the transmitter. The people who have asked for help tune in at the exact same moment wherever they are in the world. There is a "linking" between the people praying in the chapel and the person or family praying at home.

How was I going to sit in a prayer circle and help heal people all around the world?

The reader in England calls out the names of the people all over the world who want to be healed. She then pauses for about ten seconds. The person on the other end, the receiver, also says his name out loud and repeats the exact same prayers simultaneously, thereby putting the thought into action through words at his end. It's like a "Power-House of Prayer."

There is also a belief that every word has its own color and vibration. The doctor who appeared to the sensitive provided exactly the appropriate prayers, including The Lord's Prayer, which had the optimum color and vibration. That is why there can be no deviation from the prayers said aloud in the chapel and by the person at home. Speaking the words aloud, slowly, quietly, and in unison, provides the necessary vibrations.

The last thing I wanted to do was interfere with this tried-and-true method that was initiated over seventy years ago. There are countless letters on file from people who have experienced beneficial results and there were thousands more

waiting to be helped by the prayer circles.

I went to four circles in the two days I stayed there. The first was most uncomfortable. I instinctively headed for the left side of the chair, couldn't quickly locate the chart of prayers, forgot to drink the water, and was extremely nervous about letting everyone down. In addition, the chairs themselves were terribly uncomfortable: small, straight backs, rounded sides. A cushion placed in the back for comfort served only to gradually and inexorably push me forward, putting more and more pressure on my legs. I spent a very long twenty-five minutes simply trying not to fidget, which had not been the purpose of my visit. But once back at the gathering site the leader paid me a very nice compliment. "You were a surprisingly good sitter for the first time." She also suggested that the next time I put the cushion on my lap and use the small footstool that was provided.

With familiarity comes less discomfort, and the next three times were successful. Anticipation was no longer interfering with relaxation. I actually was able to meditate pretty deeply as the leader called off thirty to forty proper names. I concentrated on each name and tried to send out some energy. I found myself more empathetic to the group of people who were asking for medical or spiritual healing than I was to the smaller group who wanted material help. The names were read in two separate groups and I really believed that I was helping both.

After my second prayer session in the healing circle, I realized that the fifteen minute quieting and the half-hour prayer circle served to put me in a wonderfully peaceful state. I felt more spiritually in tune than at any other time in my life. Each visit to the chapel to sign up found me hoping there would be times available as I really was relishing my newly found presence.

My enthusiasm for the prayer circles is unabated. The flat my wife and I stayed in comes without radio, television or telephone, and we happily reserved it for three weeks next spring. We are looking forward to joining in again and being part of reinforcing the power of prayer. Basking in the new spiritual consciousness that this has brought to us, we truly believe that we are helping to heal others.

[I have been overturned]

Chet Corey

O Lord,
I have been overturned,
a rowboat beached.
Abandoned to barnacles.
My keel invites solely
the company of gulls.
Yet within my gunneled
hollowness, love ebbed
& flowed, rose & fell
like idle tides & surf.
But by middle autumn
only the damp emptiness
of smudged impressions
embedded in colder sand.
I am a curiosity
to terns, a shell tides
nudge, never retrieve
from the corrosive air.
Rescue me, caulk me, Lord
that breakers of grace
may roll upon me, right me
a christened vessel–
seaworthy, Thee worthy.

Chet Corey is a covenant Affiliate of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (La Crosse, WI). Other prayer poems from this sequence have appeared in Sisters Today *and* Broken Streets; *two poems from the sequence are forthcoming in* Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature. *He lives in Bloomington, MN.*

Autumn Thoughts

Wally Kennicutt

Lord of the harvest
may my life at autumn
bear rich and mellow fruit
refreshing all
who pause to taste
and come to know your goodness.

Thank You for this World of Beauty

Diane Gardner

Holy God, thank you for this world of beauty you have made for us. Hear my prayer today. Release the Spirit within me so that I may feel its presence and know your power. (Breathe deeply for a moment.) God, I imagine your world as a web with my prayer at the center. Please send my intentions along the threads of the web that binds the world together. Send them to my family and other loved ones. Send my prayer in ever-widening circles, to my community, to our nation, and to every corner of your beautiful world. My intentions are for peace, justice, love, and righteousness

Wally Kennicutt has written for Sacred Journey *for many years. Diane Gardner, Kathy Lindbloom and Arlene Swanson are participants in "The Flying Dinosaurs," a network of senior citizens committed to daily prayers for peace. For information write Flying Dinosaurs, 106 E. Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis, MN 55419.*

Robert F. Campbell

for your world and all who live upon it. Send your Divine Order, that all might live in harmony with one another. I ask this in the name of Love. Amen.

In the Stillness of this Moment

Kathy Lindbloom

Creator God,
In the stillness of this moment
I sense that you are
near me,
with me,
in me.
Your presence quiets my soul
As your loving peace
surrounds me,
calms me,
loves me.
As I am filled with your healing energy,
May I radiate your peace
to my family,
to my community,
to my world.
Let me be transformed so that I may
reflect your peace
back into the world.
My prayerful hope is that all
your children,
one by one,
may find the peace
that comes with your love.
Then the world shall finally know peace.
Then your children will truly be one
with you, and with all of creation.
Amen.

Goodness, I Come to You

Arlene Swanson

Goodness, I come to you, knowing you are the power that moves and acts, yet you call us to participate through prayer. Breathing deeply, I relax into your presence, sensing your love. If I have any angers or resentments still lingering in my heart, I release them and accept your forgiveness. I ask for a peaceful heart for myself and _____ (name friends, family members you wish to include). Lead us through our troubles and fill our lives with true joy. Your love, like the rays of the sun, erases all shadows.

Enlarging my vision, I ask your blessing on the communities which nurture me, my spiritual community, my neighbors, everyone in this my city, state, and country. All are your children. Breathing in your love and peace, I breathe out all tensions which divide me from myself or others.

Extending your peace to the world, I give thanks for those who bring harmony to issues that divide. The truth is: divisions are not your will and differences disappear as we learn to love more fully. Thank you for your presence around the world in so many groups who are working to meet your children's needs. Bless these, our siblings, as well as those who teach us to respect the natural world as your holy gift.

As I now go about my life, may this sense of your presence move with me and strengthen me for my tasks. May we reflect peace and love in all that we do. Thank you for this opportunity to join others in prayer.

A Service of Healing

Allen S. Maller

Reader:

We are a diverse group. Some of us have loved ones who are ill; and some are ill themselves; some have recovered; some are only recently diagnosed; and some are in the midst of difficult treatments.

Congregation:

We have come here, each of us, to find a sense of relief from our pain. We are each at different stages in our experiences. Some of us are at the beginning, and some of us have suffered for a long time. Some of us haven't begun to cry, and some of us are all cried out. Some of us feel vulnerable, and some of us feel guarded. Some of us are angry and some are empty.

Reader:

Nothing helps. I taste ashes in my mouth. My eyes are flat, dead. I want no platitudes, no stupid, shallow comfort. There's a bitter taste of sadness, emptiness inside. Insipid people with answers that do not satisfy and so-called friends who . . . do not call. Deliver me, God, of this bitterness. What is my supplication? Open my eyes to the strengths within me. Open my spirit to an awareness of Your presence. Open my heart to those around me that we may comfort one another.

Allen S. Maller is Rabbi of Temple Akiba in Culver City, CA. He is the author of a book of Jewish mysticism entitled God, Sex and Kabbalah, *distributed by Samuel Weiser.*

Read Responsively:

When pain darkens our world, give us light.
Oh Source of Life, keep me in awe of sunrise and sunset.

When despair numbs our souls, give us hope.
Help me remember moonlight, stars, and the changing seasons.

When we stumble and fall, lift us up.
Keep me in wonder of mountains and oceans, of flowers and puppies.

When doubts surround us, give us faith.
Open my eyes to the miracles of life . . . Torah and mitzvot, kindness and love.

When nothing seems sure, give us trust.
Let me find joy in every day simchas and small pleasures.

When ideals fade, give us vision. When we lose our way, be our guide.
Help me find holiness and celebrate life. Help me live and not simply exist.

Reader:

Rabbi Heeya was very ill.

Rabbi Yohanan visited him and asked, "Is your suffering of any gain for you?" Heeya replied, "Neither it nor its reward." Rabbi Yohanan said, "Give me your hand." Heeya gave him his hand and felt much better.

At another time Rabbi Yohanan was very ill. Rabbi Haneena visited him and asked, "Is your suffering of any gain for you?" Rabbi Haneena said, "Give me your hand." Yohanan gave him his hand and felt better.

Those who heard this story asked, "Since Yohanan had the ability to make Rabbi Heeya feel better, why didn't he make himself better?" They answered them, "One who is imprisoned cannot release himself from prison." (Talmud Berakhot 5:b)

Please discuss times in your illness when others helped you to feel better. Please share times in your illness when you had given up and others revived you. (After sharing ends, pause for silent meditation.)

May The One who causes peace to reign in the high heavens let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world. Amen.

Reader:

One hand washes the other. By itself, one hand is limited. Perhaps this is the reason our sages decreed that we should say a blessing when our hands wash each other and when we receive, handle, and interact. How will these hands interact today? Will they . . .

Congregation:

Harm or heal?
Hinder or help?
Grab or give?
Push or pull?

Reader:

Take your neighbor's hands in yours, look at your neighbor's hand for a moment. Now let us recite the blessing:

Blessed are you Lord our God, Ruler of Time and Space. You hallow us with your Mitzvot (commandments) and command us to take hands.

Responsive Reading:

For those afflicted with illness, anguish, and pain.

Heal us, Oh God.

Grant courage to those who suffer.

Empower us, Oh God.

Show compassion to families and friends who give care and support.

Strengthen them, Oh God.

Grant wisdom to those who probe Your world in search of treatments, answers, and cures.

Inspire them, Oh God.

For those who are frightened, lonely, and in need of support and comfort.

Help us find faith and hope, Oh God.

For those of us who question your ways, who feel betrayed or abandoned.

Guide us and give us a sense of Your presence.

Grant us wisdom, that we may understand that whenever death comes, we must accept it–but before it comes, we must resist it by prolonging life, and by making our life worthy for as long as we live.

Bless us and heal us all. Amen.

A Prayer for the Path

May we be blessed as we go on our way. May we be guided in peace. May we be blessed with health and joy. May this be our blessing. Amen.
Amen, amen, may this be our blessing, Amen.
Amen, amen, may this be our blessing, Amen.

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace. May we be kept in safety and in love. May grace and compassion find their way to every soul. May this be our blessing. Amen.
Amen, amen, may this be our blessing, Amen.
Amen, amen, may this be our blessing, Amen.

Rabbinic Wisdom

The Holy One loves people who do not lose their temper, who do not get drunk, and who do not insist on their full rights.
Talmud Pesach 113b

There are those whose life is no life: Those who are too sensitive (compassionate), those who are prone to anger, and those who are perfectionists.
Talmud Pesach 113b

Three experiences are a foretaste of the world to come: The Sabbath, A Bright Sunny Day, and Sexual Intercourse.
Talmud Brachot 57a

Four things need to be done energetically: Torah Study, Good Deeds, Prayer, and One's Daily Tasks.
Talmud Brachot 32b

The world endures because of three things: Justice, Truth, and Peace.
Talmud Avot 1:2

The world endures because of three things: Competition, Lust, and Mercy.
Avot of Rabbi Nattan

Who are wise? Those who foresee consequences.
Talmud Tamid 32a

These Wisdom Dicta *were submitted by Rabbi Allen S. Maller of Temple Akiba in Culver City, CA.*

Who is wise?
One who learns from everyone.
Talmud Avot 4:1

Who is the Mightiest?
One who can turn an enemy into a Friend.
Avot of Rabbi Nattan

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
But if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?
Talmud Avot 1:14

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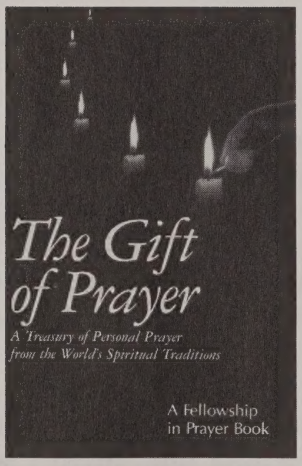

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